Australian Bureau of Statistics

www.abs.gov.au/census

DECEMBER 2005 issue 37

2001 census

census update

Priceless: Our data is now free online!

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100 years of STATISTICS

ISSN 1320-2758

census corner

Thank you – your views really do count

Michael Beahan - Director of Census Products and Services

The Census is a nationally important event and is a vital planning tool for government, business and the community.

It is for this reason I'd like to thank you all for contributing your views on our proposals for 2006 Census products and services outlined in information paper *Census of Population and Housing – Proposed Products and Services* (cat. no. 2011.0), either by attending one of our consultation sessions or through submitting a questionnaire.

User consultation sessions began in Melbourne in early October and ended in our ACT regional office on 3 November. The sessions provided a great opportunity for us to network with our clients around the country and listen to their opinions.

The main points of discussion at the sessions were the results of the previous round of user consultation in 2004, priorities for the release schedule of Census data, changes to data concepts and classifications, proposed products and services, and the introduction of mesh blocks, an innovative new approach to statistical geography in Australia.

Feedback provided by attendees at the sessions was overwhelmingly positive. In general, attendees were pleased with the change from place of enumeration to usual residence data, the introduction of the mesh block level of geography and the range of products that would be available.

We will be combining the feedback obtained from the sessions with the results of our recent client survey to ensure that the products and services produced from the 2006 Census are relevant and responsive to the needs of our users.

Currently we are putting together plans for our final round of sessions in late 2006 or early 2007. I look forward to seeing you then.

It is planned that Mesh Blocks will become the basic building block for all statistical, political and administrative regions in Australia.

You can learn more about more mesh blocks by consulting Information Paper: Mesh Blocks (cat. no. 1209.0) To obtain a copy of the draft mesh block boundaries CD-ROM or to provide feedback on theses draft boundaries contact geography@abs.gov.au

100 Years and still counting...

On 8 December 2005 the Australian Bureau of Statistics celebrated 100 years of service to the people of Australia.

The Bureau celebrated the occasion in all its offices across Australia. The Federal Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Costello, launched proceedings with a speech in the ABS Central office in Canberra.

In addition to wishing the ABS a happy 100th birthday, Mr Costello stressed the important role that the Bureau serves within Australian society and congratulated ABS staff for their continued contribution to the Bureau's cause.

"I am very proud of the ABS and its people", said Mr Costello. "Our statistical agency provides a vital resource to governments and communities and is held in high esteem around the world ".

It was on 8 December 100 years ago that Parliament gave its assent to the Census and Statistics Act 1905.

In the following year George Handley Knibbs was appointed Commonwealth Statistician and the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics was established, with a vision of reliable and objective information which are fundamental to democracy in Australia. From these beginnings the Bureau has continued to evolve in to the organisation we know today.

Fifty years later, in 1956, in what is something of a rarity, the Commonwealth and State governments agreed on an integrated statistical system that served both levels of government as well as the community at large. This integrated system appears to have served Australia well and is certainly superior to the federated system that still operates in some countries.

For more information about the history of the Australian Bureau of Statistics consult *Informing A Nation* (cat. no. 1382) and *Australian Economic Indicators* (cat. no. 1350.0).

The national office continued to operate as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics until 1975 and for much of the period was a branch of Treasury.

The next major change was the transformation of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics into an independent statutory authority known as the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This happened in 1975.

One hundred years of history has provided a fine foundation on which to stand as the ABS addresses the challenges of the future.

did you know?

100 years ago the Census and Statistics Act 1905 was proclaimed, giving birth to the ABS.

ABS data freely available

Treasurer Peter Costello announcing the entire content of the ABS web site will be accessible free of charge.

The ABS reached an important milestone in dissemination of statistics in Australia with the Federal Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Costello, announcing that the entire content of the ABS web site www.abs.gov.au will be accessible free of charge via the Internet from Monday 12 December 2005.

This continues the improved availability of official statistics to all Australians which started with all ABS publications becoming accessible free of charge on 1 July 2005.

Now You will have access to an expanded range of free data on the ABS web site, including:

- electronic publications (PDF and HTML based content);
- Census Community Profiles down to Collection District level;
- time series spreadsheets; and
- other spreadsheets and data cubes.

Printed copies of publications and Census maps are still available and can be purchased either:

- online using our **e-commerce facility** or by calling **1300 135 070**.

Start downloading your free statistics today!

Free Everything!

You now have free access to the full range of electronic ABS data on www.abs.gov.au.

2006 Census Form revealed

Regulations associated with the taking of the 2006 Census were recently tabled in Parliament. To co-incide with the tabling, the publication 2006 Census of Population and Housing: Nature and Content (cat. no. 2008.0) has been released. It describes the procedures for the Census and the topics that will be included and for the first time publically reveals the questions that will be asked on the 2006 Census form.

For 2006, there are new questions on need for assistance, unpaid work and type of Internet connection. A question on the number of children ever born will once again be asked, in line with the 10 year cycle for this question.

The publication also describes modifications to the labour force questions and revised approaches to collection and coding of age, industry and tenure type related questions. A new experimental level of geographic output called Mesh Blocks will be trialed in 2006.

The procedures for the 2006 Census have been determined after evaluation of the 2001 Census data and processes as well as extensive public consultation.

Further information about 2006 Census products and services will be published in the Directory of Census Statistics (cat. no. 2910.0) closer to the 2006 Census date.

The Classified Section

To ensure that the data from the Census is comparable with data from other collections, the ABS uses standard classifications. Classifications provide frameworks that facilitate standardised production, analysis, and dissemination of statistics. They are reviewed periodically to ensure they are up-to-date and meet current user needs. For the 2006 Census a number of major classifications have been reviewed and updated.

Industry of Employment

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 will be used to classify responses to 2006 Census questions on industry of employment.

Changes to the classification have been driven by changes in the structure, composition and organisation of business activity in Australia and New Zealand. There have been significant technological changes since the classification was developed in 1993 and some of these have effected the way industry and business operates. In addition, new industries have emerged, requiring the development of a new classification to ensure statistics remain relevant.

For more information contact Celia Quiatchon on (02) 6252 5604.

Occupation

Data on occupation are collected in a wide variety of social and labour statistical collections and are a central element in labour market analysis, educational planning, immigration policy development and a range of other government activities. Responses to the Census occupation questions will be classified according to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

ANZSCO has been developed by the ABS, Statistics New Zealand and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to provide a more up-to-date, relevant and conceptually sound classification, with improved capacity for analysis of trans-Tasman labour market data.

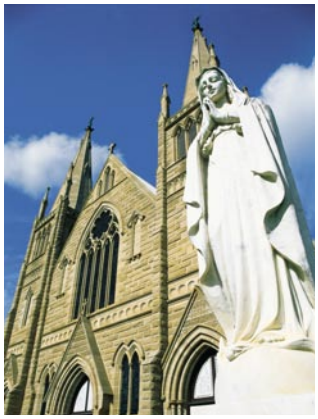
ANZSCO replaces the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition, which was used in both the 1996 and 2001 Censuses. Responses from the 2006 Census will be coded to both ANZSCO and ASCO Second Edition to facilitate time-series analysis of occupation data.

For more information on the revisions to occupation, language and religious affiliation, and ancestry classifications, email social.classifications@abs.gov.au.

Language

The Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) was first published in 1997 in response to wide community interest in the language usage of the Australian population. The classification has recently been reviewed and a second edition released.

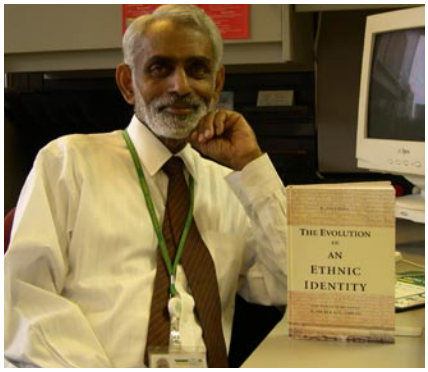
Analysis of language responses from the 2001 Census revealed that the language profile of Australia has changed since the development of the first edition. Consequently, the classification has been revised to improve its relevance to users. The Second Edition has a more comprehensive coverage of languages spoken in Australia than the first edition, particularly in regard to Australian Indigenous Languages. It also includes some minor changes to the language groupings which improve the usefulness of the classification structure as well as a correspondence table between the two editions.



Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation provides a useful indicator of aspects of the cultural diversity of Australia's society and complements other variables such as country of birth and ancestry. People's answers to the (optional) Census question on religion are coded using the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG). As well as recognised religions the classification also contains a broad group of "no religion". This is included for practical reasons and to make the classification more useful. Data on religion is used in deciding on the the location for establishing educational facilities, places of worship, aged care facilities, and in general sociological research.

This classification has undergone a minor revision.



Ancestry

There is a user need for statistical data that identifies a person's ethnic or cultural origin for those groups that cannot be adequately identified through other Census questions such as language, religion, and country of birth. A question on ancestry is particularly useful to identify particular distinct groups within Australia such as Maori and Australian South Sea Islanders, or groups which are spread across countries such as the Kurdish people or Roma/Gypsy. Responses to the Census ancestry question are classified according to the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG).

This classification has been updated prior to the 2006 Census on the basis of analysis of the 2001 Census data and extensive consultation with users and producers of cultural diversity data, academics, and ethnic and community groups.

Results from the 2006 Census will be processed and published using these new and updated classifications. The changes will be provided in full detail in the 2006 Census Dictionary which will be released before the Census. To facilitate analysis of trends over time, data from previous Censuses will be concorded to the new edition of the classification.

The Census – not too cool for school

Keynote speaker Adam Spencer meets with school students at the CensusAtSchool launch.

CensusAtSchool, a major ABS initiative in online education, was launched at the Melbourne Museum on October 20. The project, is free, voluntary and open to all Australian schools.

School registration for CensusAtSchool is open now. For more information and registration details go to the ABS website www.abs.gov.au and click on the CensusAtSchool link.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, The Hon. Chris Pearce MP, officially launched the project with Australian Statistician Dennis Trewin also presenting a speech.

Comedian Adam Spencer was the keynote speaker and entertained the audience with a humorous account of his love affair with numbers.

The packed audience at the museum included senior educational administrators from around Australia and school students from Caroline Springs College and Regency Park Primary School. CensusAtSchool has the strong backing of both public and private educational bodies in all States and Territories with over 1,100 1,500 schools currently registered.

CensusAtSchool is designed to show students from Years 5 to 12 how statistics can be relevant to them.

did you know

Over 1,700 schools from all over Australia have signed up to the project

This will be achieved by giving students the opportunity to model the Census process by voluntarily participating in a questionnaire during the first half of 2006. After 11 July 2006, students will be able to obtain random samples from the responses to these questionnaires. This data will then be used in various classroom activities or activities provided on the ABS web site.

CensusAtSchool will be an engaging tool for students to learn and use statistics. This will increase interest in statistics and encourage more students to consider studying statistics at a tertiary level. Another purpose of the project is to raise awareness of the national Census of Population and Housing to be held on 8 August next year.

CensusAtSchool is an international project originating in the United Kingdom. It has now grown to include projects in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

The CensusAtSchool project is one of many ways the ABS is involved in assisting schools. The ABS, through the National Education Services Unit , provides free resources to schools through the ABS website.

In addition, the ABS promotes statistics in schools through a range of publications, support for teachers and interactive games. It also supports other organisations using or promoting statistics in schools. CensusAtSchool plays a significant part in this larger effort.

Australian Statistician shares a joke with keynote speaker Adam Spencer.

CMUs reach consensus

With the 2006 Census now less than a year away the Census Management Unit (CMU) managers from all States and Territories attended a workshop 10 - 14 October in Queenscliffe Victoria. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss planning for next year's Census and outline specific strategies for dealing with some of the harder to enumerate areas as well as ethnic, Indigenous and homeless enumeration.

Of particular interest were issues like difficult to access premises, such as secure apartment buildings. These types of buildings are increasing in size and number, particularly in capital cities. Each CMU provided input to a broad discussion which looked at a range of strategies to deal with this issue.

Recruitment is another issue that generated healthy discussion at the workshop. In a very tight labour market it will be a challenge to find sufficient numbers of applicants who posses the right skills and qualities to fill the 30,000 field positions. The workshop also discussed and considered the benefits and impacts of the introduction of an Internet Census form and the newly developed PC based Field Management system.

The workshop also worked through a number of "what if" scenarios to explore contingency plans, mitigation strategies and disaster recovery plans where the Census operation was impacted by, for example, a natural disaster.

Australian Statistician Dennis Trewin joined the workshop for an evening and gave a keynote address where he spoke about the history and importance of the Census, some of the risks that faced the Census and then answered questions from the group.

Paul Williams the Census Program Head gave the closing address focussing on the success of the Australian Census model which is built on trust placed in our Field Staff.

did you know

On the night of the last Census the population of Queenscliffe was 3,743 persons.

Engaging individuals

There will be a lot more talking, networking and consulting with Indigenous communities next year, as ABS Indigenous engagement managers (IEMs) lend their expertise to the 2006 Census.

IEMs have the ongoing responsibility of building and maintaining networks between the ABS and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in their state or territory.

With the 2006 Census only eight months away – 8 August 2006 is Census Night – the role of many of the IEMs is changing as they take on supporting activities for counting Australia's Indigenous populations in 2006.

IEMs will now be using their knowledge, skills and networks to support the Census, according to Dan Black, Director of the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATSIS).

"Several IEMs have already been heavily involved in the lead-up to the Census, with managers in Western Australia and the Northern Territory playing a key role in the Census Indigenous Dress Rehearsal," he said.

"Other IEMs have been promoting the Census by assisting with, and starring in, the Census training video, and promoting Indigenous employment opportunities at career forums."

" In the future, IEMs will also provide basic statistical training so that Indigenous data can be fully utilised for planning and other purposes in the communities."

The Census support will focus on implementing the Indigenous Enumeration Strategy, which has been developed over the last three years specifically to enumerate all Indigenous Australians in the Census.

"Working as part of their local Census Management Unit team will give IEMs the opportunity to build on the efforts they have put into their role, and bring these benefits to the Census," said Dan.

It is through IEMs that the ABS will get ideas on how to improve the relevance of Indigenous statistics, and how best to return ABS information to Indigenous communities and organisations in formats relevant to local needs.

Online products – in this Space

L to R: Warren Richter (STR), Paul Williams (ABS), Michael Beahan (ABS) and John Ellenberger (STR).

Australian Statistician Dennis Trewin meets with Space-Time Research CEO Warren Richter.

The ABS has chosen Space-Time Research (STR) to provide the software to power the online products for the 2006 Census.

The two parties met recently to discuss the progress of the development of the 2006 Census product suite.

With the growth in Internet usage, the outcome of this partnership will be increased accessibility of Census products via the Internet for Census data users in the Australian community.

The range of new electronic products developed in conjunction with STR will ensure that different levels of user needs are met by the availability of varying levels of products.

Census data users, for the first time, will have greater flexibility in selecting tables and different geographic areas that meet their particular need.

The result of this will be intuitive, easy-to-use web-based navigation, with the coverage of topics and selection of different geographic areas for the different levels of Census user expertise. The new online products will be a readily available and accessible range of Census data with useful data tables, designed and developed to better match between users' needs and level of experience with Census data.

Currently, both parties are involved in designing the user interface for the 2006 Census product suite. Next year the products will undergo rigorous testing to ensure they can effectively meet the needs of all users of Census data. Several key aspects of the testing process include: functionality testing, accessibility testing, end user acceptance testing, and usability testing. This is the final stage in the products development before release, which is scheduled for mid-2007 onwards.

The 2006 Census represents the second time the ABS has joined forces with STR to create innovative Census products. The two organisations previously worked together in 1986 to produce CDATA, the first ABS product to provide Census statistics on CD-ROM. This new electronic dissemination method represented a major technological shift for the ABS, just like the current suite of products which is being developed for the 2006 Census.

With the help of STR the ABS plans to make the 2006 Census product suite the best Census products ever.

did you know

There were 60.5 million visits to the ABS web site in 2004-05

RADL performs the Italian Job

Confidential Unit Record Files, or CURFs, represent the most detailed statistical information available from the ABS. Researchers and analysts are increasingly turning to CURFs for its ability to unlock advanced statistical solutions.

CURFs contain data from ABS collections in the form of unit records which have been confidentialised by removing name and address information and restricting the level of detail available. Researchers perform their own analysis and modelling on the CURF data to produce their own output based on their individual research needs. CURFs are provided to researchers on CD-ROM and/or via the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL).

The RADL is a secure on-line data query service accessed via the ABS web site. Authorised users submit queries in SAS and SPSS via the RADL web interface against CURFs that are kept within the ABS environment. The results of the queries are checked for confidentiality then made available to the users via their desktops. As the CURFs are kept within the ABS environment, the ABS can release a finer level of detail via the RADL than can be made available on CD-ROM.

Among the most popular CURFs is the Census Household Sample File (HSF), a one per cent sample of records from the Census of Population and Housing. HSFs from every Census since 1981 are available, and the 2001 Census HSF is available at two levels of detail - basic and expanded. The Expanded HSF is only available via the RADL and the Basic HSF is available on CD-ROM and/or via the RADL .

Earlier this year two CURF clients from The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) conducted research initiated by Professor Franco Papandrea at the University of Canberra into the experience of Italians in Australia. Using data from the 2001 Census HSF, the researchers compared a range of characteristics, including income, occupation, proficiency in English and educational attainment, of those born in Italy with those born in Australia with Italian ancestry.

Accessing the Expanded Census HSF via the RADL allowed the researchers to look at the person's year of arrival in Australia in greater detail than the variables available on the Basic Census HSF. While the Basic HSF indicated whether the individual arrived in 2000-01,1996-99 or before 1996, the Expanded HSF via the RADL gave five categories back to 'before 1986'. This was beneficial as the researchers were interested in comparing characteristics by year of arrival.

The analysis revealed the experience of Italians did not appear to be sensitive to year of arrival for the period of interest to the research. However using the RADL to access this finer level of detail was extremely useful in this analysis.

The Census HSF and all other CURFs are released under strict conditions and clients are required to sign an undertaking stating that the information will be used for statistical purposes only. The undertaking and explanatory information about access to CURFs is available from the ABS web site Access to ABS CURFs page.

census.users@abs.gov.au

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For all ABS inquiries, call National Information and Referral Service: 1300 135 070

Helpful email addresses:

client.services@abs.gov.au – email us with your statistical requirements.

census.users@abs.gov.au – to receive census information

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Census Update is a regular free production of the Census Section of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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Issue 37 December 2005
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